

# SWINE FLU

## INFORMATION AND ADVICE FOR HIGHER AND FURTHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

The World Health Organisation has now moved to Phase 6, which means that 'swine flu' is now technically a global pandemic.

- Government advice is still that the public should carry on with their daily lives for as long and as far as possible within the constraints the pandemic imposes, whilst adhering to further government advice, taking sensible personal precautions and adopting good hygiene measures.
- Higher and Further Education Institutions should continue to make their own decisions regarding scaling down operations, with expert advice from their local Health Protection Agency services.

*NB. Both the Higher Education (HE) and the Further Education (FE) sectors comprise a range of different 'types' of institution. This guidance is intended to provide a basis for planning and preparation across both sectors as a whole.*

### PEOPLE DISPLAYING FLU-LIKE SYMPTOMS

If one of your staff, students or visitors has recently come back from an affected country and is displaying flu-like symptoms, ask them to stay at home or in their place of residence and call their local GP or NHS Direct on **0845 4647**.

### WHERE TO FIND MORE INFORMATION

The most accurate public information on the current situation can be found here:

DirectGov: [www.direct.gov.uk/swineflu](http://www.direct.gov.uk/swineflu)

Health Protection Agency: [www.hpa.org.uk](http://www.hpa.org.uk)

NHS Information Line: **0800 1513513**

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (DIUS) and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) will be publishing updated advice on their websites:

[www.bis.gov.uk](http://www.bis.gov.uk)

[www.dcsf.gov.uk](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk)

Specific guidance on Infection Control can be found here:

[http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/doc/11486/ifc\\_HEandFE.doc](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/doc/11486/ifc_HEandFE.doc)

Details of the National Framework for pandemic flu can be found here:

[http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH\\_080734](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_080734)

## WHO ALERT LEVEL RAISED TO 6

The World Health Organisation has increased its influenza pandemic alert level to 6. This means that there is now evidence of increased and sustained human to human transmission of the swine flu virus across a number of global regions.

### ***What does this mean for the UK?***

Within the UK we are beginning to see signs of sustained transmission of the virus within the community. There have now been 1320 confirmed UK cases and we can expect the numbers to increase rapidly over the next few weeks and months, boosted by the onset of the autumn/winter when flu viruses spread more readily.

We cannot yet be certain how many people will be affected by the virus. Virtually all the cases in the UK so far have been mild.

The UK is well-prepared for dealing with a pandemic. We have good stocks of ant-viral drugs for treating flu and from the autumn we shall have access to a vaccine.

### ***What does this mean for the Higher and Further Education sectors?***

All universities, colleges and learning providers should continue to operate as normal, while remaining alert to any students or staff exhibiting flu-like symptoms. Any student or member of staff who may have flu should stay at home and medical advice should be sought.

You should all now urgently review your emergency contingency plans.

## WHAT YOU SHOULD DO

- **Keep staff and students informed** and direct them towards general background information [i.e. [www.dh.gov.uk/pandemicflu](http://www.dh.gov.uk/pandemicflu)].
- The **risk of infection** can be reduced significantly by ensuring good standards of personal hygiene. Information relating to the NHS 'Catch it, Bin It, Kill It' campaign provides guidance on this ([http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH\\_080839](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_080839)).
- **Check/update your business continuity plans.** Plans should be based on the assumption that your establishment will remain open throughout the pandemic, although there may be a need to scale down certain operations. You should consider
  - how your institution would stay open, and how you might reduce operations, should it be necessary;
  - Ensure you know who to contact at your local Health Protection Agency.
- Make sure there are **contact lists** of names, phone numbers and addresses for all staff and students.
  - Agree a plan for communications with staff, students, parents and any other key stakeholders for use if a pandemic is formally confirmed by the World Health Organisation (WHO).
- Consider your policies for **staff absences**, e.g. to include staff taking time off to care for a sick member of their family.
- You must ensure that your plans take account of the needs of students with **learning difficulties** to ensure that they can identify symptoms and that they are clear on the precautions that can be taken. Information for residential special schools and colleges can be found in section 2D of the DCSF guidance: <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/doc/13532/FullGuidance.pdf>
- You must ensure that your plans also take account of the needs of **international students**.
- You should keep in close contact with your Student Union, if you have one. Students should be encouraged to consider setting up '**flu buddy schemes**', so that those who have not been affected by the virus can support those that have (every effort should be made to ensure that physical contact is kept to a minimum). This may be of particular value for students living alone with no local or family support.
- Consider how you would manage any **media interest**. Consider preparing a number of standard responses and identify a number of media spokespersons. Ensure that media communications are managed centrally.
- You and your governing body should ensure that all concerned are clear about the **decision-making responsibilities** and the process for keeping the institution open, reducing operations, or for implementing its closure.

- You should **assess the impact** of the disease upon your organisations.

Primarily you should focus on:

- Taking decisions to minimise the spread of the disease
  - Taking decisions to ensure student and staff welfare
  - Analysing the potential impact upon the day to day operations
  - Exploring ways in which these may be maintained
  - Managing internal and external communications
  - Considering whether there are services that could be scaled up/down, and/or suspended should it prove necessary
  - Determining priorities and resourcing day to day operations
  - Prioritising demands
  - Consideration of any longer term implications upon the organisation
  - Authorising additional resources to support critical services
  - Analysing the impact to the medium/long term corporate objective
  - Setting the agenda for reinstatement of any suspended university or college activity following a pandemic
  - Protecting the reputation and goodwill of the institution
  - Managing relationships with partners
  - Supply chain reliance on particular critical suppliers e.g. fuel, cleaning contractors, caterers.
  - Checking the coverage of your insurance policies
- As part of the response, institutions should consider any organisational **'trigger points'** for action. These will include but are not limited to:
    - Severe shortage of lecturing staff
    - Severe shortage of cleaning staff
    - Severe shortage of maintenance staff
    - Inadequate numbers of security staff
    - Severe disruption to public transport network
    - Power cuts or other utility failure

If you would like to contact DIUS for further information please contact us:

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